(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Government of Oman proposed to appoint an Honorary Consul to the State of Kerala. This proposal was referred to by the Chief Minister of Kerala in his letter of 24th December, 2001 to the Minister of External Affairs. After examination the proposal was not agreed to.

In do-U.S. defence cooperation

2699. DR. KARAN SINGH:
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the recent visit of the Prime Minister, talks were held for expanding defence cooperation between India and the U.S. and establishing a new strategic framework;

(b) if so, the outcome of the talks; and

(c) the steps taken in pursuance thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) During Prime Minister's visit to Washington D.C. in November, 2001, he discussed with the U.S. President ways to qualitatively transform India-U.S. relations in pursuit of their many common goals in Asia and beyond. In this context, they welcomed, *inter-alia,* resumption of bilateral defence cooperation and agreed to enhance consultations on the New Strategic Framework of the United States that was unveiled by President Bush in May, 2001.

(b) The two sides have since taken a number of steps to strengthen mutually beneficial defence cooperation. Raksha Mantri paid a reciprocal visit to the United States in January, 2002 at the invitation of the U.S. Defence Secretary. The bilateral Defence Policy Group (DPG) that had been held in abeyance since May, 1998, met in New Delhi in December, 2001 to exchange views on international security affairs as also to promote India-U.S. military-military contacts, defence supplies and technical cooperation in defence production. Following the DPG meeting, the Executive Steering Groups of

Army, Navy and Air Force have met, besides the Joint Technical Croups and the Security Cooperation Group. A separate dialogue has also been set up between the newly-established integated Defence Staff of India and the Joint Chief of Staff of the United States.

(c) To pursue their consultations on the New Strategic Framework including Missile Defence, the two sides agreed to establish a New Strategic Framework Dialogue. The U.S. Government has in the meanwhile, continued to provide information on its development plans for missile defence on various occasions, including during the meeting of DPG.

Third Mission In New York

2700. DR. KARAN SINGH:
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to set up a Third Mission in New York; and

(b) if so, the constitution and functions thereof indicating the reasons for setting up the Third Mission?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir, However, an Indian citizen, Shri B.K. Agnihotri, residing in the United States, has been appointed as Adviser in the Embassy of India, Washington and Ambassador-at-large for Non-Resident Indians/People of Indian origin with the aim to strategically promote better coordination within the Non-Resident Indians/People of Indian origin as well as economic cooperation, investment and commerce by the Non-Resident Indians/People of Indian origin with India. His office is functioning from New York.